

GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE OF MAN'S SIN

NO. 779

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 3, 1867,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"Yes, you heard not; yes, you knew not; yes, from that time that your ear was not opened: for I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb."
Isaiah 48:8.***

THE ancient people of God were most annoyingly emotionless, and although the Lord taught them very plainly and repeatedly, line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, yet they would not understand His will. More especially, in order to convince them that Jehovah was the only true God, and that the gods of the heathen were not gods, He was pleased to send them prophets to foretell things to come; and when those events transpired which had been so plainly predicted, one would have thought that ordinary sense and reason would have led them to adore the God who thus proved His existence and His foreknowledge. But even this powerful proof did not convince them; they still paid more respect to the gods of the heathen than to the one and only living God, and their souls sought after the idols of the nations. The Lord rebukes them for this folly in the verse before us. "Yes, you heard not," though I spoke so plainly that the deaf might hear, yet you would not listen to My voice. Though taught by God-sent prophets, yet the people refused to be instructed. "Yes, you knew not," though your own internal consciousness might have taught it to you, apart from any voice, yet you would neither learn from without nor consider within. Nothing can exceed the obstinate stupidity of the unrenewed heart; it will not learn, let the teaching come as it may. "From that time that your ear was not opened," for your ear had become as though sealed up, impervious to sound, your heart had become so vile with iniquity as to be incapable of feeling. And this was not because the Jewish people were foolish or naturally devoid of intelligence, for, as we all know, to this very day there is no sharper generation under heaven than the sons of Judah; and yet, in the days of Isaiah and until the captivity, they proved themselves to be most arrant fools, in that they still went after the idols which had brought them no blessing, and forsook the Lord who alone could benefit them.

As in a mirror, let us see ourselves. Let the unconverted man see his own picture. God has spoken quite as pointedly to you as ever He did to the seed of Israel. He has called you by providences of different kinds. His mercies have wooed you to the worship of a generous God. Afflictions have called you to kiss the hand that smote you, and to turn unto the Lord, who smites us out of mercy to our souls. Providence has spoken to you with many tongues, with singular patience, and persevering tenderness. As for the Bible, which is open before you, and in all your houses, has it not often addressed you with a voice most clear and simple, "Turn you, turn you; why will you die?" There is not a lack of express texts of Scripture to assure you that the way of sin is not the path of peace, and that only the path of obedient repentance and trust in the Lord Jesus can lead you to happiness here and hereafter. You have some of you been called by the admonitions of affectionate and godly parents, who perhaps from the skies are beckoning you this morning in spirit to follow them to paradise; you were further invited to the path of holiness by loving friends in Sunday school—the recollections of whose earnest warnings have not quite faded from the tablets of your memory. Frequently the voice of God's minister has bid you to come to Jesus from the pulpit; and conscience, a still nearer pleader, if you would but hear his voice, has often echoed the voice of God setting its seal to the testimony of God's word, bidding you turn from your evil ways, and acquaint yourself with God, that you might be at peace. And yet up till now it may be said of many of you, "Yes, you heard not; yes, you knew not; yes, from that time that your ear was not opened." As yet the plow has been driven upon a rock which has not felt its power; the bread has been cast upon the water, and after many days there is no return.

Three times a *yes* is put in our text, as if to show God's wonder at man's obstinacy, and the certainty that such was the state of the heart. It was certainly so. You heard, but it went in one ear and out the other; you heard and heard not; you heard as sticks and stones might hear, or as cold, insensible steel. You knew not though the knowledge was before your eyes, and you might have known it. You are, I fear, many of you, among the blind people who have eyes, and the deaf people who have ears, who refuse to use their eyes and fast close their ears through willful ignorance. You know not what you might have known. The very birds of the air know their time, and the fishes of the sea obey the laws of the world's Great Governor, but ungodly men are more stupid and foolish than irrational creatures. The net is spread before us, and yet we fly into it; the lure is laid before our very eyes, and yet we willfully are ensnared. This accusation which God brought against the Jews, He can this day bring against the Gentiles, and who shall dare deny it?

More painful still is it to remember that in a certain degree, the same accusation may be laid at the door of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Even those who have received divine grace to become the sons of God, have not such a degree of spiritual sensibility as they should have; alas, my brothers and sisters, we may well bewail ourselves that *we* do not hear the voice of God as we ought. God often speaks in the heart of man, but man regards Him not. There are gentle motions of the Holy Spirit in the soul which are unheeded by us: there are whispers of divine commands and of heavenly love in our souls, which alike are unobserved by our lead intellects. God speaks to us in the silent shadows of the night, but when we lie awake we are not with Him, though He is with us. How often do we shirk a duty clearly revealed to us as a duty? How constantly do we postpone obedience to precepts which are only to be fully obeyed by being kept at once? How constantly are we in the habit, when a command becomes disagreeable, even though we know it to be right, of ignoring it, forgetting it, and finding excuses for neglect? How little is there of the little child about us, and how much of the willful man! We are not like the sheep that follows close at the shepherd's hand, but, I fear, we are more like the bull unaccustomed to the yoke which kicks against the pricks. Whether you have to make the same confessions in private that I have to make, I do not know, but verily *I* must say, "Guilty," if the Lord says to me, "Yes, you have not heard": "yes, you have not known." There are matters within which we ought to see, corruptions which are making headway unobserved, sweet affections which are being blighted like flowers in the frost, untended and uncared for by us, gleams of heavenly sunlight which would enter if we did not shut them out, glimpses of the divine face which might be perceived if we did not wall up the windows of our soul; but we have not known. It is marvelous how little of introspection there is with many of God's people, how little they look within, how little they look after their own vineyard and the garden of their own souls. I am afraid most of us would have to say, "It is so," if it were said, "Yes, you have not known": for alas, though our ears are open, yet they naturally soon close themselves; they need to be cleansed again and again. Sanctification has need to be in us, my brothers and sisters, a perpetual work, a daily work. If ever we are to be wholly sanctified—spirit, soul, and body (as we thank God we shall be), we shall need to have the blood of Jesus applied every day, to go continually to Him and ask that the Holy Spirit would manifest in us the cleansing influence of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for still we do not hear and know as we should hear and know, nor are our ears opened as we should desire.

Having thus reminded you, dear friends, of your sin, trusting we may be led to confess it with deep humility, I have now an encouraging truth of God to tell you this morning, a very simple one, leaving no room for any of the graces of oratory, but one which to my mind has been exceedingly refreshing, and I trust it may be to yours. It is this, that all this folly and ignorance, and obstinacy and rebellion on our part, was foreknown by God, and notwithstanding that foreknowledge, He yet has been pleased to deal with us in a way of mercy. That one truth is the subject of this morning's discourse. We read it in these words, "For I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb." The same truth is stated in the fourth verse, "Because I knew that you were obstinate, and your neck was an iron sinew, and your brow brass." First, *we shall endeavor to address this truth of God to the believer*, and secondly *to the unbeliever*.

I. First, THE BELIEVER.

The latter part of our text mentions *a mournful fact*, "I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb." believer, here then is this sorrowful truth, you have

dealt very treacherously! Does not the very mention of this bring tears into your eyes? Ah, if your heart were not hard, it would be so. You have dealt *very treacherously*. Let me sound those two words again, “treacherously,” “*very treacherously*.” You are the beloved of heaven, redeemed by blood, called by divine grace, preserved in Christ Jesus, accepted in the Beloved, on your way to heaven, soon to be with God, and yet, “You have dealt very treacherously”: very treacherously with God, your best friend; very treacherously with Jesus, whose you are; very treacherously with the Holy Spirit, by whom alone you can be quickened unto eternal life! That word “treacherously,” is one which a man would not like to have applied to himself in the common transactions of life; he would feel it to be very galling, and, if there were truth in it, very degrading, and yet I question whether it will produce the same effect upon our minds when it is applied to us in relation to unfaithfulness to God. We have dealt with Him very treacherously. Come; let me refresh your memories, my beloved in the Lord. How treacherous you and I have been to our own vows and promises when we were first converted! Do you remember the love of your espousals, that happy time, the springtide of spiritual life when the rain was over and gone, and the voice of the turtledove was heard in your soul? Oh, how closely did you cling to your Master then! You heard some of the older saints complaining that their souls were cleaving to the dust: you wondered at them, for you said within yourself, “The blessedness I know in finding Christ will continue with me forever: He shall never have to charge me with indifference; my feet shall never grow slow in traveling the way of His service; I will not allow my heart to go wandering after other loves. White and ruddy is my beloved with all human excellence and divine glories combined; farewell, all you meaner creatures, for in Him is every store of ineffable sweetness. I give all up; I renounce *all* for my Lord Jesus’ sake.” But now, has it been so? Charge your memory—has it been so? Conscience, what do you say to this? Alas, if conscience speaks, it will say, “He who promised so well has performed most ill. Prayer has oftentimes been slurred—it has been short, but not sweet; it has been brief, but not fervent. Communion with Christ has been forgotten by the day, no, by the weeks together. Instead of a heavenly mind, there have been carnal cares, worldly vanities and thoughts of evil. Instead of service, there has been disobedience; instead of fervency, lukewarmness; instead of patience, petulance; instead of faith, confidence in an arm of flesh.” We have, if we look at what we thought we would be and at what we are, reason to confess that we have dealt very treacherously. Look at this picture, and on that: look at what we vowed to be, and at what we have been, and truly none among us will be able to say, “Not guilty,” but we must confess that we have been traitors to the Most High!

This is not all. It is not merely that we have failed in promises which were made in a period of excitement, but we have been treacherous to obligations which were altogether apart from voluntary vows on our part; we have been treacherous to the most blessed relationships which divine Mercy could have instituted. Know you not that you are redeemed men and women, and therefore the property of the Lord Jesus? “You are not your own,” says the apostle, “For you are bought with a price.” “Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold.....but with the precious blood of Jesus.” I ask you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, most solemnly, have you not lived as if you were your own? Have you not found yourselves full often spending your strength for self and for the world, and robbing Jesus of that which He purchased at so dear a price? Treachery to the blood of Jesus! What words shall I use in denouncing it? Words would little avail—let our penitent thoughts purge the sin which is so surely in us. Treacherous to Your wounds, O Jesus, oh forgive us, and let us not be further guilty of it! How shameful to be treacherous to Him who never forgets us, but who this day stands with our names engraved on His breastplate before the eternal throne.

Remember, that we are soldiers of Christ, enlisted soldiers, sworn in for a life-long campaign. As soldiers, by cowardice, disobedience, and desertion, we have been treacherous to a very shameful degree. You know what the military penalty is for a treacherous soldier on earth! Truly, if we had been accused and condemned by court martial, and ordered to be shot dead, we would have been dealt with most righteously. We have been armed, and carried bows, and have turned back in the day of battle. When we ought to have fought we have fled, when we should have stood fast, we have swerved, and when we might have conquered we have basely surrendered. We have been treacherous also as disciples of Christ; we were taken into His school to be taught and trained; we engaged to sit at His feet, and learn His word; we engaged to imitate His example, to abide by His precepts. Who among us has not played

the Peter, and sometimes denied Him? Who among us can say that he has not forsaken Christ, and fled in some sharp hour of persecution? Beloved, as disciples we are not worthy of the name. If the Master should discharge us forever from His sacred school of holy learning, and say, "You have been false friends; you have eaten bread with Me, but lifted up your heel against Me; you have only followed Me in the days of sunshine, but have gone from Me in the days of storm," should we not have to bow our heads before Him, and say, "Lord, it is even so"?

Worst of all is the fact that we have been treacherous to our Lord in a relationship where fidelity constitutes the very essence of bliss. I mean in the marriage bond which exists between our soul and Christ. There is not one among us who would not blush or feel indignant if the slightest accusation could be brought against our conjugal fidelity to those who are dear to us on earth; but there is a marriage which has been consummated between us and a nobler Bridegroom than this earth can find, and here—ah, where are your blushes!—let your cheeks burn as you confess the unpardonable infidelity—we have been unfaithful to the Well-beloved, the infinitely glorious Husband of our souls. We are one with Him, by eternal Union one, and yet we treat Him so treacherously! Never did He have a thought towards us that was unkind, never one faithless wandering of His holy immutable mind; but as for us, we have thought of a thousand lovers, and allowed our heart to be seduced by rivals, which were no more to be compared with Christ than darkness is to be compared with the blaze of noon. It is said of Israel that although they had the manna from heaven to eat, and God-given water to drink, and the divine presence resplendent in the night in the pillar of fire, and comforting by day in the shadowy pillar of cloud, yet they did yearn for the leeks, the garlic, and the onions of Egypt. What foolery is this, that God all glorious is to be despised, and the rank ill-scented garden stuff of Egypt—leeks, and garlic, and onions, are put in the place of Jehovah! And yet such is our case. Thrice glorious Lord Jesus, we must confess in Your presence, that we have behaved very treacherously, and gone after worthless trifles when our soul should have been set on You alone.

I shall not enlarge upon a subject so painful, because I trust I may have sufficiently revived your memories to bring you into a state of humiliation. We pass on to *the divine statement* of the text, that all this was known—"You have behaved very treacherously, and I knew that you would do so." It was all known. The Lord foreknew all the original corruption of His people—

*"He saw them ruined in the fall,
Yet loved them notwithstanding all."*

It was no secret that we were transgressors from the womb. God knew it; He chose us as such; He saw us depraved, debased sons of Adam with judgment unhinged, conscience darkened, affections polluted, and wills perverted; He saw the neck as an iron sinew, and the brow of brass, and yet He chose us who from birth were full of sin. As the Lord foreknew the fountain of sin, so He knew all the streams which would gush from it. There is not a sin which a child of God has committed, or ever shall commit, which was not clearly foreseen to the prescient eyes of God Most High from all eternity. You deny Him to be God if you deny that, for it enters into the very essential of Deity that He should know everything. There are no unknown things to God. He fills His own eternal now; man only occupies the present, which is ever fleeting; but the past, the present, and the future are all as one moment with God. A thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday when it is past. Therefore all the actual transgressions of His people were conspicuous before His eternal mind—

*"Long before the sun's refulgent ray
Primeval shades of darkness drove."*

And all the evil thoughts which have gone with these evil actions were foreknown to Him. If there are mixed up with the sin some motive more vile than the crime itself; if unexpressed and unknown to man there should lurk in our breast some passion more pernicious than malice ever produced; if there should be a thought more devilish than Satan's vilest deed; if there should be known to us some cursed imagination so diabolical that we dare not whisper it in the ear of our most tender friend, yet all was well known in heaven ages before. God knew that the root of all evil was in your heart, and foresaw how it would shoot and spread, and bear its horrid fruit. Perhaps there is someone here who is recollecting in his mind some gross sin of fearful name into which he fell in bygone years, but which he never will forget let him live for centuries. God has forgiven him, but he never can forgive himself. Some of the old

bones of former feasts with Satan will stick in our throat. It matters not though we have humbled ourselves a hundred times for them; we still have need to say with David, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." Let us here again recall to our minds the fact that all our sinfulness and the development of it, and all the thoughts and evil imagination that went with that development, and all and sundry the aggravations of our sin, whatever they may have been, must clearly have been known to God, and nothing has come out of us which God did not know would come out of us. We have never surprised the Most High; we have never brought Him to such a position that He could say, "I did not know this." We have never gone into any sin of which it could be said concerning God, that He did not know that it would so be worked by us.

Now, I think I hear impatient minds inquiring clamorously, "What purpose is there in the preacher's repeating to us this statement? He puts it over and over again in very simple terms; what is he aiming at? Where is the edification to the people of God?" In the first place, here is the edification. Seeing that this is most certain and sure, I want you *to adore the amazing grace of God!* Do you see, then, that knowing and foreknowing, God nevertheless chose us, elected us though He saw us covered from head to foot with sin! When election's eye fell upon us, we were regarded as the helpless infant in Ezekiel, cast out unwashed and unswaddled to perish in our filth, but then, viewing us as such, the divine Heart loved us! "His great love," says the apostle, "wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." We were, as Kent puts it—

*"Loved when a wretch defiled with sin,
At war with heaven, in league with hell,
A slave to every lust obscene,
Who, living, lived but to rebel."*

Do you not admire the marvelous sovereign grace which could have chosen you in the sight of all this? I can understand God's choosing me if He had not known my sinfulness, or if He had known only a part of it, but that He should choose me when He had an infinitely clearer sense of my sin than I ever can have, is indeed wonderful. I do know something of my sins at times, and am horrified at them, yet I never have had such a clear estimate of my sinfulness as God has, for the least sin is hateful to God, and He looks upon it as worthy of the eternal fires of hell. Yet we, in whom there is not only to be found little sin, but multitudes of great iniquities, were chosen from before the foundation of the world! Child of God, does not this make you admire electing love?

Further, remember that in consequence of your election you were redeemed. Come here, and wonder at the price that was paid for you, a traitor! You have dealt very treacherously, and yet you were redeemed not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ—when Christ knew what you would be! What do you say to this? Does not that thought make your eyes swim in tears as you think that He who hangs bleeding there, foresaw you as being unbelieving, backsliding, cold of heart, indifferent, careless, lax in prayer, and yet He said, "I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life"? O redemption, how wondrously resplendent do you shine when we think how vile we are!

And then, dear friends, remember that you have been adopted into the Lord's family as well as redeemed. Now, when a man adopts a child, he supposes that he shall have an obedient child, that the child will be of a pliable temper, and he shall be able to rule and govern it. But by-and-by perhaps it turns out to be a very sorry specimen of the race. It grieves the generous spirit much to experience its ingratitude to him. Then he complains to himself, "If I had known what this child would have been, I would never have adopted it; I would have looked somewhere else." See, beloved, God knows what His children will be, that they will deal very disobediently, and yet for all that He says, "I will put them into the family." I might thus enumerate all the marvelous works which divine grace has worked in us and for us, and I think they would all shine very abundantly in the simple light of God's having known what we would be, and having done, with this knowledge, all that He has done for us.

Furthermore, I think this truth of God is very important to us, because in the light of it *our security is clearly manifest*. I cannot understand how we can be perplexed with the thought that God will cast us away now we are His people, if it is true that all the sins we have committed since conversion were all

present before His mind; for surely if there is a reason in our sin for God casting us away now, since He foreknew that sin, it would have been an equally valid reason for His never loving us at all. A man undertakes mining operations in such-and-such a place, he says, "I shall dig for iron." Well, he meets with great difficulties, hard rocks to bore through, and so on. He comes to this conclusion, "If I had known of this labor, and of the expense, I would not have sought for the metal here." But suppose the man is well aware of everything, and that he meets with nothing but what he foresaw, then, you may depend upon it that the man means business, and having commenced operations he will continue working till he obtains that which he seeks after. Now our God can never be obstructed by a circumstance in us which can create surprise in His mind or throw His course out of His reckoning. He knew that we would be what we are, and He determined to save us in the teeth of all our rebellion; and, my brothers and sisters, I am persuaded that since the divine determination was wisely made, the cost all counted, and every circumstance taken into consideration, there can be no shadow of a fear that He will ever turn aside from His eternal purpose. Has He found me, as His child, to be exceedingly unruly? Will that tempt Him to drive me from the family? He knew I would be unruly! It might have prevented His beginning to love me, but, seeing He has begun, how can it operate to make Him cease from blessing me? Oh let this be a comfort to you, when the evil of sin weighs most heavily upon your faith! Your soul is married to Christ. Now, when a man takes a wife, it is for better or worse; and I can imagine that a man with a very base wife might say, "Had I known this woman better, had I known how she would constantly make my house unhappy, there certainly would have been no marriage tie between us." But no husband could say that unless he was an arrant fool, if he were able beforehand to see as in a glass all that would happen between him and his spouse in his married life, and if he with his eyes open made the choice. Surely he could never repent it without confessing his folly in running into the snare. If he has wisely done he will stand to his engagement, and prove the power of his love. So it is between our condescending Lord and His elect. He has taken all our sins into the estimate when entering into marriage bonds with us, and He says, "I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord." "The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away." He has foreknown all their faults, and yet ordained them unto eternal life. Therefore are his people safe.

This truth also, I think, should tend very much *to enhance our sense of the fullness which is treasured up in Christ Jesus*. The Lord our God has provided for us in Christ, all the necessities that can occur, for He has foreknown all these necessities. "I knew that you would be this and that." Oh, is your heart heavy this morning? God knew it would be: there is the comfort that your heart's needs are already treasured in the promise. Seek the promise, believe it and obtain it. Do you feel, this morning that you never were so consciously vile as you are now? Behold the crimson fountain is still open with all its former efficacy to wash your sins away. Never shall you come into such a position that Christ cannot aid you. No pinch shall ever come in your spiritual affairs in which Jesus Christ shall not be equal to the emergency, for it has all been foreknown and provided for in Him. A man goes on a journey across the desert, and when he has made a day's advance and he pitches his tent, he discovers that he lacks many comforts and necessities which he has not brought in his baggage. "Ah," he says, "I did not foresee this: if I had this journey to do again, I would bring these things with me so necessary to my comfort." But God has foreseen all the necessities of His poor wandering children, and when those needs occur, supplies will be found ready. "My grace is sufficient for you." "As your days, so shall your strength be."

I think the truth of God is capable of being turned in many lights, but I must leave it with you. I believe the child of God will find that, simple as the doctrine of God's foreknowledge is, it is remarkably full of comfort. Some, who know no better, harp upon the foreknowledge of our repentance and faith, and say that, "election is according to the foreknowledge of God": a very Scriptural statement, but they make a very *unscriptural* interpretation of it. Advancing by slow degrees, they next assert that God foreknew the faith and the good works of His people. Undoubtedly true, since He foreknew everything; but then comes their groundless inference, namely, that therefore the Lord chose His people because He foreknew them to be believers. It is undoubtedly true that foreknown excellencies are not the causes of election, since I have shown you that the Lord foreknew all our *SIN*: and surely if there were enough virtue in our faith and goodness to compel Him to choose us, there would have been enough demerit in our bad works to have compelled Him to reject us; so that if you make foreknowledge to operate in one

way, you must also take it in the other, and you will soon perceive that it could not have been from anything good or bad in us that we were chosen, but according to the purpose of His own will, as it is written, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Herein God's great power may be seen, and His decree is made to roll, in peals of thunder over the heads of rebellious men, that they shall hear it even though they gnash their teeth at it. So then, "it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but God who shows mercy."

II. And now, for a short time, as God shall help me, I have to use the text in its relation to UNCONVERTED PERSONS.

I shall hopefully believe, this morning, that there are some in God's house, who, although they are unsaved, are, nevertheless, sufficiently awakened to desire eternal life, who have in them at least some sense of their guilt and their danger, and are anxious, if it may be, to find mercy. The doctrine of my text may afford them some comfort. My dear friend, you have discovered lately the natural vileness of your heart. If at one time anyone had told you that your heart was deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, you would have been very angry, but you know it to be so now, painfully know it. You wish sometimes that you had never been born, sooner than that this should be the case. This day you have brought before your mind by your quickened conscience, your actual transgressions. There is no need that I should read the list, but the roll may well be written within and without with lamentations, for it is written within and without with iniquities. In addition to this, this morning, you have a deep regret for your long delay in seeking mercy, for you have been called by the gospel thousands of times, sometimes more than outwardly called, for conscience has been impressed and awakened, but your goodness "has been as the morning cloud, and as the early dew": you have quenched the Spirit of God; you have frequently resisted the better volitions of your own spirit. You feel sorrowful that this is the case. And, this morning, you are willing to acknowledge that there have been special aggravations in your case—you have sinned against more light than usual, against more expostulations than ordinary, sinned with less excuse, with more fearful pertinacity. All this you acknowledge. Now, my dear hearers, the gospel of Jesus Christ is sent to you in the state in which you now are, to you lost by nature, ruined by practice, and undone in a thousand ways. The gospel says to you, even to you, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Now, in order that you may get a hold on that gospel, despite the difficulties which your sins would raise, I would remind you of the truth of God of which we have been speaking. All these sins, delays, aggravations, and rebellions of yours, were all foreknown to God; therefore, since He has sent the gospel to you, I pray you be not slow to accept it, since it is not possible that your sins, whatever they may be, can at all influence against the fact that if you believe and receive the gospel you shall be saved. For, let me remind you that if God had not intended to save men upon believing, if their sins were so great that He did not intend to save them if they trusted in Jesus, why then, since He foreknew these things, He would never have planned the plan of salvation at all! If He stops now and refuses to be gracious, why did He not stay His hand in the very first stage of the business? Would you devise a scheme unless you meant to go further? Who sits down to make plans of a house, unless he has some notion of carrying them out? If God intended no mercy to such a sinner as you are, why did He devise a plan which is suitable to such a sinner as you are? Why invent a scheme by which a rebel might be saved, if He foreknew that on account of sin that rebel never could be pardoned? Let me ask you, do you think God would have gone farther—gone to the vast expense of providing a Savior, if really the gospel were null and void? Jesus Christ hangs on the cross to die for sinners, sinners whose sins were all foreknown; do not say, therefore, that God does not intend to save, for if He had not intended to save, He would have stopped before He gave His Son for a sacrifice, and nailed Him to the cross.

"Ah, but," you say, "Mine is a particular and special case." Then I remind you that, since God had known all that, if He intended to leave your case out, why did He not say so in the Bible? If this were something new that had arisen since the Scriptures were written, then I could understand that yours might be exceptional; but nothing is new with the Most High. Now, if the Lord intended to leave out a case, He would have mentioned it, and we should have found somewhere in the Bible, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature except such-and-such a one." I do not find it so. "Preach the gospel to every creature": here it is, "He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved." He makes not an exception. He bids us go and proclaim it east, west, north, and south. "Ah, but," you say,

“Still mine is a very special difficulty.” Yes, but I tell you again, your God foreknew, and you may depend upon it, He provided for it in the plan of salvation. He says, “If you believe, you shall be saved.” He says not, “Unless you have committed this or that.” He says, “If you believe”: and God is not true unless He saves every soul that believes in Jesus. Though a man had damned himself a thousand times with the blackest filth that ever came from hell; yet, if he believes in Jesus, God must be true to His solemn promise—it is not possible that the sin of man could justify God in flying from His promise or denying Himself. He declares full pardon to every soul that trusts in the Lord Jesus: I pray you slander not my Lord and Master by saying that this or that could make Him take His words back, or break His covenant in Christ Jesus. Your blasphemies—He knew what oaths you would swear. Your lusts and evil deeds—He knew into what mire you would plunge. The imaginations of your wicked heart—He knew them; yes, they have been before His eternal mind every moment since the world began, and before it. He knew that you would be a sinner—He never ceased to know your sins. All things are present before God at every time, and your aggravating sins have been before God's mind at every moment of eternity, if we may use the expression. And yet, notwithstanding that, He says, “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, and they shall be as wool.” God knew you, sinner.

He did not fall upon the penitent's neck and kiss him, and think him clean and pure and chaste while He kissed him. He knew that he had spent his living with harlots. God knew that he went to feed with the swine, and yet He took him into His house and heart, and fed him daintily. He knows what you have done in secret, in the darkness of the night, in the chamber where none may follow you, in the inner chamber of your soul, where you have rebelled worse than in your outward actions. He knows it all, and yet He says, “Let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” I do humbly and earnestly trust that the Lord may lead some sinner, whose sins He has so clearly discerned, to perceive the suitability of Christ to his own case, to close with the proclamation of mercy, and to say—

*“I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter, pardon gives;
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.
I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away,
I know I must forever die.
But if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried,
This were to die (delightful thought)!
As sinner never died.”*

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 48.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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